



**THE BILTMORE VILLAGE  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
MAY 1, 1992**

# **THE BILTMORE VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

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**JOINTLY FUNDED BY:**

**THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL RESOURCES  
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA**

**AND**

**The City of Asheville  
Historic Resources Commission of  
Asheville and Buncombe County**

**July 1, 1992**

## **CREDITS:**

The development of this plan has been a project of the Historic Resources Commission of Asheville and Buncombe County (H.R.C.).

## **STEERING COMMITTEE:**

On July 17, 1989 the Historic Resources Commission contacted all property owners in the Biltmore Village Historic District and requested that any parties interested in being represented on the Steering Committee for this plan contact the HRC Director. Interested individuals were placed on the committee.

All proposals and solutions contained in this plan have been approved by the majority of this committee.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

K. Ronald Clemmer  
Chip Gould  
Rick King, The Biltmore Estate  
Frank & Marjorie Martin, All Souls Church  
Shirley McCullough, HRC  
Walt McGee  
Harold Moore, Wachona Bank  
Mrs. Lee Mynatt  
Ms. Melissa Myers, BB&T  
Dorothy & Duffy Reints  
Jim Proctor

## **CONSULTANT:**

R. S. Griffin, Architect  
32 All Souls Crescent  
Asheville, N.C. 28803  
704-274-6979

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## **ILLUSTRATIONS:**

Special appreciation is expressed to Biltmore Estate® and Nore Winter for the use of historic photographs. Historic drawings published in this plan are by Richard Morris Hunt, Frederick Law Olmsted, and R. S. Smith except where noted otherwise.

## **CONSULTING DEPARTMENTS:**

Asheville Planning & Zoning  
Public Works  
Department of Transportation  
Traffic Engineering Department  
Carolina Power and Light  
Southern Bell

## PREFACE

This booklet contains specific guidelines for municipal, state and public utilities improvements in Historic Biltmore Village and any recommendations should be used as a guide by all government departments and agencies engaged in public works relative to the topics contained in this plan. In addition, recommendations have been approved by the Steering Committee to work in conjunction with the *Biltmore Village Historic District Design Guidelines* and to inspire private property owners in the district as to how they might adequately prepare for the future in Biltmore Village.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1.	INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2.	GOALS FOR THE BILTMORE VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN	11
CHAPTER 3.	HISTORY OF BILTMORE VILLAGE 1917 MAP	23
CHAPTER 4.	ORIGINAL AND EXISTING PLAN AND CHARACTER OF BILTMORE VILLAGE 1990 MAP	33
CHAPTER 5.	FUTURE LAND USE AND ARCHITECTURE LAND USE SUBDIVISIONS MAP	53
CHAPTER 6.	THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT PEDESTRIAN AMENITY AND PUBLIC UTILITY IMPROVEMENTS MAP	59
CHAPTER 7.	THE AUTOMOBILE	67
CHAPTER 8.	SIGNAGE	77
CHAPTER 9.	UTILITIES	84
CHAPTER 10.	SUMMATION • PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IMPROVEMENTS • PHASED DEVELOPMENT • SOURCES FOR FUNDING • SCOPE OF WORK PROPOSED MAP	89

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

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<b>SCOPE OF THE VILLAGE PLAN</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HOW THE VILLAGE PLAN IS ORGANIZED</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING THE VILLAGE PLAN</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE VILLAGE PLAN</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>USE OF THE VILLAGE PLAN</b>	<b>7</b>

## SCOPE OF THE VILLAGE PLAN

All government and public works activities involving highways, streets, sidewalks, municipal lighting and signage, utilities and land use are addressed in this plan. The Village Plan was developed to assist government agencies and private parties in determining the priorities and needs for Biltmore Village. The recommendations developed can assist in the coordination and implementation between private sector improvements and the municipality.

Biltmore Village is a Local Historic District and a National Register Multiple Resource District. The village continues to serve as a gateway to the city and provides visitors with a first and lasting impression of Biltmore Estate®; a National Historic Landmark.

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## HOW THE VILLAGE PLAN IS ORGANIZED

The Development Plan is organized in ten chapters.

CHAPTER ONE is the introduction.

CHAPTER TWO discusses the goals of the Village Plan highlighting the original design, potential marketing strategies, economic impacts, development and land use patterns for continued growth.

CHAPTER THREE contains an historic overview of Biltmore Village with respect to milestones—both in the past and within the last ten years. Of special note in this chapter is information regarding the most recent wave of private sector redevelopment in Biltmore Village.

CHAPTER FOUR features base maps which show the original plan of Biltmore Village as completed in 1917 and contrasts them with existing and proposed land use maps, from Chapters 4 and 10. Original and existing conditions are described and compared. Existing structures are categorized as contributory, fill and non-contributory.

CHAPTER FIVE defines six land use areas and proposes building types and setbacks. Architectural concept sketches clarify the proposed imagery of each land use area.

CHAPTER SIX is dedicated to the major concern of the Village Plan: The pedestrian. The human scale and aesthetic qualities of the Village were created by the pattern of tree plantings, sidewalk construction, pav-

ing, lighting, and street furniture. These elements must extend throughout the district to achieve the greatest degree of identity. Re-establishing the cohesive identity of Biltmore Village, to the pedestrian, is the primary component. From a retailers perspective, it is necessary to create an image that is not only pleasant but marketable in the competitive field of cultural tourism today. Actual scale maps of Biltmore Village reveal quantities of improvements required to accomplish this goal.

CHAPTER SEVEN contains recommendations relative to the extreme automobile congestion in Biltmore Village. The present bottleneck street plan and the 700,000 tourists who visit Biltmore Estate® yearly have created a chaotic, unmanageable environment. Signal lights, parking and a proposed bypass are discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT reinforces the necessity for a street sign ordinance and makes recommendations for overall signage in Biltmore Village. Signage is a particularly critical issue as it must reflect the retail community and direct the visitor while supporting the historic content.

CHAPTER NINE points out the maze of public and private utilities which compete for attention in Biltmore Village. Future re-organization and facility upgrades are essential to the Village Plan and its future success.

CHAPTER TEN summarizes the opportunities discussed in the Village Plan and proposes a format for an action plan.

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## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING THE VILLAGE PLAN?

Property owners in Biltmore Village have lobbied for infrastructure improvements in Biltmore Village for the past thirty years. Lobbying efforts have been individually oriented. Requested services have not been coordinated and municipal involvement has lacked the cohesive impact of long range planning.

By using this Village Plan, members of City and State Departments, council members, Mayors, and individuals can be assured of developing owner-approved plans which were created for the benefit of the whole and thereby benefit the individuals.

This plan seeks to encourage improvements which will decrease visual clutter, strengthen historic context, and encourage unity through contextual design.



Asheville inherited a planned community from George Vanderbilt. By restoring, repairing and replacing all elements of that original plan with today's needs in mind, we can create a new Biltmore Village which can demonstrate our sensitivity and intelligence in protecting this important national treasure. Our goal is to provide for a nationally marketable product. These efforts will produce enhanced revenue for the city and developers.

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## PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE VILLAGE PLAN

With the support of local merchants, Biltmore Village was designated an Historic District by City Ordinance # 1624 in 1987. Design Guidelines were completed and printed in October 1988 to define specific requirements for any work which impacted the visual environment in Biltmore Village. Both individuals and municipal departments are bound to compliance by this document.

Individual property owners have complied with the Design Review Guidelines and the projects-to-date have significantly enhanced Biltmore Village.

The need for a Development Plan was anticipated by the State and City to address long range planning issues.

The Historic Resources Commission (HRC) prepared a request for proposals and sent it to interested parties. Proposals were received August 9th, 1989. Mr. Robert Griffin, A.I.A. was selected to develop the Development Plan on October 2, 1989.

Community members from Biltmore Village were asked to participate in planning sessions to develop a list of problems and solutions for the Biltmore Village. The consultant and the Director of the Historic Resources Commission recorded suggestions from the community and supplemented them with historic research and surveys. Problems, solutions, recommendations and prioritization of issues were democratically decided on by the members of the Biltmore Village Steering Committee and are contained herein.

The recognition and protection of historic resources in the Biltmore Village community originated in 1978 with the completion of a multiple resource study sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. As public awareness and sensitivity towards the historic resources in the Village increased, property owners and retailers engaged in private

improvements programs. Spurred by unified marketing efforts and commercial and residential growth in the area, the property owners decided to capitalize on the unique features of the Village. In an effort to manage their growth and control the future of the village, property owners and retailers fully endorsed the City's designation of a historic district. Retailers in the community now rely on the Biltmore Village Historic District Guidelines as one tool to facilitate sensitive infill development and appropriate rehabilitation of existing properties.

As the advantages and the effects of historic districting became evident, the community again endorsed a program in conjunction with the City and the State Historic Development Office to carry the Village Planning and protection process a step further. In June 1989, the Village supported the HRC in applying for a Certified Local Government Grant to develop a Development Plan for the historic district. The Development Plan would address issues for improving traffic and parking, standard designs for curb cuts, a sidewalk and street furniture improvement plan, and specific recommendations for improving some of the area's problem properties.

The interest created by this proposal went well beyond property owners and merchants. Local groups and municipal departments felt the Development Plan could go beyond its present scope of work if municipal support was provided. With such support, the Consultant and Steering Committee developed wide-ranging issues and resolutions.

Drawing on the experience of individuals involved with the development of the Biltmore Village Guidelines, the committee contacted State and local Department of Transportation (DOT) officials, current and long range city planners, city management, public works and the private utility companies. The Village realized that any long range program developed to improve the area would require not only a committed owner/merchant community but would require a public/private partnership. As an outgrowth, the Development Plan will address existing issues and concerns and will provide recommendations for protecting existing historic resources, future growth and land use patterns for the next twenty years.

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## THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

One of the most important aspects contributing to the success of this Development Plan will be its adoption as a "small area plan" component of the *Asheville City Plan* (2010 Plan). The 2010 Plan was adopted in 1987

as the City of Asheville's master plan for the entire City. It addresses all requisite zoning, development, recreation, transportation and land use issues and provides a framework for goal setting and meeting long-range objectives.

One critical component of the 2010 Plan was to create "neighborhood plans". The concept behind neighborhood plans is to address the present and future needs of both residential and commercial neighborhoods throughout the City. As the Steering Committee began its issues identification process, senior planning department officials recognized the applicability of the Village Plan to the 2010 neighborhood planning program. Encouraged by the commitment of local property owners to resolving issues in the community, the City Planning Department suggested that the Village Plan contain basic elements of the small area plans in the hope of submitting it to Asheville City Council for adoption by Asheville City Council as the first neighborhood plan.

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## USE OF THE VILLAGE PLAN

In order to properly use a development plan it is necessary to understand what a local development plan is.

Robert E. Stipe described such a plan in the Fall issue of *The Alliance Review*:

*Preservation planning is becoming a part of many local comprehensive plans as it becomes a new focus on reviving and maintaining small towns, downtowns, and inner cities. The political arena is also addressing issues like neighborhood quality and livability. However, what it takes to make a preservation plan effective is its strong integration with a community's overall growth plan.*

*Establishing a preservation plan is not complicated. Historic buildings and other cultural resources are located, mapped, photographed, and otherwise documented. Thereafter, they are evaluated against specified national, state, or local criteria, and "listed" or "registered" as landmarks. All of these measures are intended to protect them against destruction or inappropriate change through private or public action. Briefly stated, a preservation plan may be implemented through the following nine steps:*

*First: The preservation plan is officially adopted as a component of the official city plan by resolution or*

*ordinance of the local governing board. It is thus given the same official policy status as the land-use, transportation, housing, and other elements of the comprehensive plan. The adoption resolution should specify that in the event of conflict with other elements of the comprehensive plan, the historic preservation plan will take precedence.*

*Second: Adoption of the plan should be followed by an Executive Order of the mayor and /or manager, explicitly requiring each city department to give special attention to the needs of any historic resource under its jurisdiction, as in Section 110 of the National Historic Development Act or the old EO11593.*

*Third: The adoption resolution should specify that all public projects undertaken or permitted by the city as well as those of the state or federal government, regardless of type, that might have an adverse effect on any listed historic resource will be subject to special review and comment by the local planning agency or governing board.*

*Fourth: All private projects coming in for planning agency review, whether through a voluntary or a regulatory process, would receive the same scrutiny, with permits denied where permitted or appropriate binding conditions attached. This process can be quite effective if properly handled.*

*Fifth: The preservation plan would identify capital needs, providing for the local equivalent of the former federal Acquisition and Development grants to development groups or individuals, below market rate loans, or local revolving fund contributions. These are "front door" forms of development assistance. Local appropriations for general neighborhood improvement grants would also be appropriate. In this way, development projects become part of the long-term capital budget. Various tax deferral and abatement schemes or "back-door" assistance would also have a place here.*

*Sixth: The plan should identify annual maintenance costs for things like streets, protective services, social services, historic building and site maintenance, schools, environmental improvements, recreation, tree care and management, day care and the like. These programs met through the city's annual operating budget, would help improve the quality of life in historic neighborhoods or districts, even if they do not go directly to the fabric of old buildings.*

*Seventh: The two previous examples speak to capi-*

tal and operating costs that favor the needs of residents in historic neighborhoods. However, there will always be a few buildings that would be better preserved if owned and maintained by the local government. A proper preservation plan would specifically identify these.

*Eighth: The preservation plan must identify appropriate areas where uncompensated regulation is the best approach. These fall into two broad categories. The first of these addresses the problems of building additions, infill, demolition, and new construction in historic neighborhoods—the sorts of regulation we now accept as the normal design review process for historic areas or structures. A second and equally important set of regulatory activities would deal with area zoning (intensity, use, off-street parking, etc.); health and sanitation; building construction and housing maintenance; the maintenance of vacant lots; the care and maintenance of trees; undesirable land uses; earth moving and disturbance; and other activities directly affecting the quality of life in every neighborhood.*

*Ninth: The plan would identify special conservation areas or districts in which special planning and design efforts are needed to help them continue functioning. Many fine neighborhoods have been lost prematurely because their needs were not met at that critical point when they could have gone either way. I think of these types of areas as pre-natal historic districts but which may have a much broader base of associative values. A point worth noting about these areas is that while they would not come in for any special regulations not already available in non-historic districts or areas, they would get extra attention in planning and city services.*

*Such a preservation plan can stand as an independent local effort or activity. Its greatest potential, however, is the strength it both borrows from and contributes to the urban general plan.*

In the 1980's, community leaders and retailers in the Village began to recognize the deteriorated appearance of their neighborhood. As retailers, they understood that a unified coherent retail community with a unique history and architecture could vastly improve its competitiveness. While renewed vigor and commitment to the Village is evident, development pressures along what is now a major north-south and east-west traffic corridor threaten the Village as never before. The development community is quite aware of the Village's close proximity to downtown, a major Inter-

state (I-40) and Biltmore Estate® (anticipated to draw 700,000 in 1990). The Village will also encounter upcoming State DOT improvements, major capital improvement projects and public utility upgrades.

Traffic alone can be expected to increase dramatically in and through the Village as DOT;1) adds an exchange ramp on I-40 and widens Sweeten Creek Road from the Village to I-40, and; 2) widens Hendersonville Highway and McDowell Street. In addition to road improvements, the replacement of the historic McDowell Street Bridge will significantly impact on the aesthetic qualities as one enters the Village from the north.

Local water and sewer capital projects planned for the next five years could easily strip the Village of its unified streetscape features such as trees, granite curbs and specifically designed storm grates and utility covers.

As demographic patterns change in the area bringing with it new development pressures, property owners are fighting to maintain some control over the disposition of the community. While the existing zoning defines the entire Village as commercial services, the Biltmore Village Design Review Guidelines have established design parameters for infill development and rehabilitation.

Just as the Biltmore Village Design Guidelines have arrested the introduction of insensitive and inappropriate development, the object of the Biltmore Village Development Plan will be to actively and aggressively promote the reconstruction, rehabilitation and reclamation of the original plan. This would include reclaiming pedestrian amenities, reunifying the landscape, mitigating the intrusion and damage caused by excessive through traffic, and promote the Village as an integrated, coherent mixed-use retail area.

Use of the Village Plan requires adoption and follow-up by the City. It also requires a sincere effort by the property owners to participate in a joint investment venture which will yield a return not only in increased property values but also in a marketing opportunity for businesses in the Biltmore Village Historic District.

If you have any questions as to how you may help to use and implement this Village Plan, contact:

**The Historic Resources Commission  
of Asheville and Buncombe County**

P O Box 7148  
Asheville, North Carolina 28802  
(704) 259-5836